

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-10 PM-07 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 OMB-01 MC-02 TRSE-00 EB-11

AID-20 IGA-02 DRC-01 /118 W
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R 101145Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 125

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

SECDEF

CINCPAC

CNO

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2552

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CE, US, UK

SUBJ: PURCHASE OF SHIP BY SRI LANKA NAVY

REF: A) STATE 197163; B) COLOMBO 2497

1. EMBASSY CONCURS IN RELEASE OF COURTNEY-CLASS VESSEL FROM
HOLD LIST BECAUSE VESSEL DOES NOT FIT SRI LANKA NAVY REQUIREMENTS
AS ALTERNATIVE TO SOVIET OFFER.

2. SOVIETS HAVE NOW REPORTEDLY MADE FIRM OFFER OF NEW-CONSTRUCTION
PETYA-CLASS FRIGATE FOR DELIVERY IN 1975. TERMS WOULD BE 50
MILLION RUPEES PAYABLE IN LOCAL CURRENCY OVER 10 YEARS. PRICE
IS SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION DEPENDING ON EQUIPMENT DESIRED BY
SRI LANKA NAVY.

3. AS REPORTED REFTTEL B, OCT 8 TO 14 PORT VISIT BY TWO
SOVIET NAVY SHIPS INCLUDES DAY AT SEA AND THREE DAYS OF IN-PORT
DEMONSTRATIONS OF PETYA-CLASS FRIGATE FOR SLN.
ENTRY OF SHIPS AND PROGRAM, INCLUDING LARGE RECEPTION
ABOARD KOTLIN-CLASS DESTROYER FOR GSL OFFICIALS AND
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DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND SCHEDULED RECEPTION BY RUSSIAN

AMB, GIVE VISIT TRAPPINGS OF "FORMAL" SHIP VISIT.
PROFILE IS SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN PREVIOUS SOVIET SHIP
VISITS. IT APPEARS SOVIETS ARE TRYING TO MAKE FAVORABLE
IMPRESSION WITH VIEW TO PUSHING THROUGH SHIP SALE AS QUICKLY AS
POSSIBLE.

4. GSL'S PARTICIPATION IN THESE ACTIVITIES SUGGESTS GSL IS
SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING SOVIET OFFER OR AT LEAST WISHES TO SEEM
BE SO DOING. CURRENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES DO NOT APPEAR TO
BE MAJOR DETERRENT AS PAYMENTS WOULD NOT BEGIN UNTIL 1975 DELIVERY
DATE AND RUPEE REPAYMENT TERMS WOULD AVOID PROBLEM OF GSL'S LACK
OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE.

5. WE BELIEVE IT UNWISE TO TELL GSL THAT ONLY SHIP WE HAVE IDENTIFIED
FOR POSSIBLE SALE DOES NOT APPEAR MEET SLN NEED. INSTEAD, WE
PROPOSE TO TELL GSL AND SRI LANKA NAVY THAT SO FAR USG HAS BEEN
UNABLE IDENTIFY SHIP FOR SALE WHICH FITS GSL SPECIFICATIONS BUT
WE WILL CONTINUE KEEP GSL'S REQUEST UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION
UNTIL GSL INFORMS US REQUEST SHOULD NOT STAND. WE WOULD APPRECIATE
WASHINGTON CONCURRENCE THIS APPROACH.

6. WE HOPE SUCH STATEMENT TO GSL WILL SERVE AS APPROPRIATE
RESPONSE TO GSL'S FORMAL REQUEST AND AT SAME TIME KEEP OPEN
POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE OF PURCHASE OF SHIP FROM USG UNTIL ISSUE IS
FINALLY RESOLVED. SOVIETS AND SLN ARE PUSHING HARD FOR COMPLETION
OF SOVIET SALE BUT WE DO NOT KNOW EITHER POLITICAL LEVEL WILL,
IN THE END, SANCTION IT. WE CONTINUE BELIEVE SUITABLE OFFER
FROM WESTERN SOURCE IS IN OUR INTEREST. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND
THAT
EFFORTS BE MADE BY UK AND US TO IDENTIFY VESSEL NEWER THAN
UK PUMA OR US COURTNEY-CLASS WHICH COULD BE OFFERED TO GSL. IT
APPEARS AT THIS POINT THAT PROPOSAL WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE SOFT
REPAYMENT TERMS IN ORDER PROVIDE ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO SOVIET
OFFER.

VAN HOLLEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SHIPS, PROCUREMENT, MILITARY VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973COLOMB02552
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS VAN HOLLEN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: COLOMBO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731042/aaaabemc.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A) STATE 197163; B) COLOMBO 2497
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19-Dec-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <23-Jan-2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PURCHASE OF SHIP BY SRI LANKA NAVY
TAGS: PFOR, MILI, CE, US, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005